

Environment Department  
1 Cottage Road

Report of: Executive Member for Environment, Transport and Air Quality

Meeting of: Executive

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> October 2022

Ward(s): All

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## Subject: Greener Together Programme

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.0. The report provides an overview and summary of the first-year pilot of the Greener Together programme and seeks approval to continue the scheme for a further 2 years.
- 1.1. It sets out the process and method for engaging residents in submitting ideas for greening their local neighbourhood and how those ideas are prioritised for a decision to support.
- 1.2. The report also sets out the process by which the Council will consider and review applications and requests for parklets on the public Highway and how it will manage the approval, installation, and management of those.
- 1.3. To support the community led approach to the Greening Together programme the reports sets out the Greener Together Champions scheme to train and support residents to manage and maintain spaces and act as local community organisers.
- 1.4. Finally, the report sets out the outcome of the Council's recent successful outcomes of the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund, Future Parks Accelerator programme and Green and Healthy Streets to further support the development and delivery of green infrastructure in the borough and a local nature recovery programme.
- 1.5. The greener together programme continues to incorporate priorities and key goals of contributing towards a more equal Islington, in creating a cleaner, greener,

healthier Islington and in enabling Vision 2030, including the key role of greening in adapting to climate change.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the direction and development of the Islington Greening Together (IGT) Programme, where the Environment Department will work in partnership with Homes and Communities and Fairer Together departments to develop a further two-year programme of community led greening projects, up to the value of £1m, based on the year 1 pilot, which will be informed by engagement with residents, and elected members.
- 2.3 To note the feasibility process which includes adopting an evidence-led approach and prioritising projects according to need/where issues have been highlighted including: areas of deprivation, areas of green deficit, areas of high flood risk and areas of high heat risk.
- 2.4 To note the engagement process includes engaging with the Ward members on which applications should take priority in their wards across the programme.
- 2.5 To note the outcomes of the Council's successful Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund bid (the development of a pocket park design framework and Green Finance Investment Token to support further investment into Green Infrastructure projects in the borough.) Future Parks Accelerator Fund and Green and Healthy Streets Project
- 2.6 To agree that the Service Director for Environmental and Commercial Operations has the authority to approve changes to the Greener Together Programme, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport, and where they are on the public highway, also with the Director for Climate Change and Transport.
- 2.7 To note that the Director for Climate Change and Transport authorises individual greening schemes on the public highway. Authorisation for these to IGT projects be through Service Director for Climate Change and Transport for all Highways Assets, Service Director for Environment and Commercial Operations for Parks assets and Head of Estate Services for Housing assets.
- 2.8 To note that a further two-year programme of community-led greening projects will be developed.

## 3. Background

### Strategic Context

- 3.0. Islington declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019. Islington is one of 6 London boroughs most susceptible to climate change. It is one of the most densely populated boroughs in the whole of the UK and has very limited opportunities to create more green space. Approximately 30% of households in Islington do not have gardens.
- 3.1. The Council is seeking to create a greener Borough with good quality parks and open spaces for all residents. Islington though has the lowest amount of green space of any borough in the country with only 13% of the borough being greenspace. To address this the Council needs to develop a mature green infrastructure network with increased tree canopy cover, increased habitat and urban greening directly contributing to improving air quality, sustainable urban drainage and urban cooling.
- 3.2. The importance and role of urban greening is widely recognised for playing a significant part in creating more sustainable neighbourhoods for not just the health and wellbeing of residents, but also the broader benefits of mitigating local flood risk and heat risk and for its role in wider climate and ecological adaptation.
- 3.3. Islington Council has an ambitious vision for the future of Islington, with increased quantity and quality of urban greening across the whole borough and improving areas of local green deficit, flood and heat risk management and increasing benefits to both residents and businesses in the borough. As we further assess our transport network to make more sustainable transport provisions and choices, new opportunities are arising for urban greening through reuse of the public realm. Our vision is one which creates a tangible transition to a much greener borough and the role of community led greening proposals plays a significant role in this transition. Tangible benefits to residents and businesses through increased urban greening include more visual greening and wellbeing opportunities, more contact to green space and connections to nature, social connections through gardening and food growing, environmental benefits of increased tree canopy, cooling, shade, reduced localised flooding, increased biodiversity and filtering of pollution and noise to support efforts to make Islington a net-zero carbon borough by 2030.
- 3.4. Islington Greener Together is an important, cross departmental, collaborative tool in achieving community participation as well as meeting wider council objectives in creating a cleaner, greener and healthier borough. This is one of several programmes which help to deliver our commitment of greening the borough with an additional 1.5 hectares of usable green space by 2026.
- 3.5. IGT is a community-led, inclusive, borough wide, greening programme. Residents, businesses and community groups have been welcomed to submit ideas for greening within their neighbourhoods and those projects that are supported will be developed in collaboration with the community turning the

ideas into buildable schemes that the Council will implement, and the community will adopt to manage and maintain.

- 3.6. IGT helps support a better quality of environment and the creation of a network of new community led green spaces makes a significant contribution to building communities and strengthening social networks helping to reduce social isolation and support people’s health and wellbeing.
- 3.7. This programme directly supports the strategic priority to work together to create a cleaner, greener, healthier borough as part of creating a more equal future. The Greener Together Programme is a key part of the Council’s Natural Environment Workstream for the Net Zero Carbon 2030 Vision. It provides a means for local residents and communities to be able to take direct action to green their neighbourhoods. This supports the outcomes of increasing access to green space, making places more climate resilient, and increasing biodiversity. It also supports the delivery of the Council’s Biodiversity Action Plan. There are also strong links to the Islington Transport Strategy that sets out to create more people friendly streets and encourage active travel and the greening of streets is a key strand to achieving that.
- 3.8. The programme supports workstream 5 (Natural Environment) and workstream 2 (Transport) of the Net Zero Carbon 2030 Vision. As summarised in the table below.

	Workstream 5	Workstream 2
Broad objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the quantity of green infrastructure in the borough.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce the need for cars by making active travel the easiest and most enjoyable option.</li> </ul>
Specific actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the borough’s biodiversity.</li> <li>Improve the borough’s resilience to climate change.</li> <li>Apply planning policies that seek to protect and enhance biodiversity and the borough’s green infrastructure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure every area in Islington is a Liveable Neighbourhood, where feasible.</li> <li>Explore next steps and funding options for ‘School Streets’ or environmental improvements at School streets.</li> </ul>

Relevant KPIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1000sqm of new greenspace by 2026.</li> <li>• 20 Greener Together Champions in the first year.</li> <li>• 30 new Public Realm Green Infrastructure Schemes delivered per year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All neighbourhoods in Islington by 2030 benefit from Liveable Neighbourhood treatment by removal of through traffic.</li> <li>• Every primary school will have a school street or environmental improvement scheme by 2030</li> </ul>
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- 3.9. The Islington Transport Strategy has an objective to seek the creation of new public spaces which are green, inclusive, and more enjoyable places to walk, cycle and relax. It contains the following policies and commitments:
- Encourage the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems in transport schemes (SUDS).
  - Implement roadside planting systems that intercept particulate air pollution.
  - Green Islington's streets and public realm by introducing trees, planting and small - scale informal green spaces wherever possible.
  - Seek opportunities to use trees and planting to screen and separate people walking, cycling and wheeling from motor traffic.

## Year 1 Programme Summary

- 3.10. The Islington Greener Together programme launched on the 3rd of March 2022. Potential applicants were able to apply online via the Council website, with a closing date of 29th April. It was widely promoted. Potential applicants were able to apply online via the Council website, with a closing date of 29th April. It was promoted through press releases, Islington website, Twitter, Islington Life, e-bulletins, banners, posters displayed in parks notice boards, poster and leaflets distributed to libraires and leisure centres and 3 ward partnership meetings.
- 3.11. The primary criteria for a successful application required proposals to be publicly accessible, on publicly managed asset Highways, Housing and Parks. The application process included the requirement for applicants to maintain the new planting, with support of the Champions programme (see details below) and a maintenance agreement is part of the criteria requirements.
- 3.12. Project proposals for 21/22 included a range of schemes from across Highways , Parks and Housing assets, from community gardens, parklets, pocket parks, sustainable urban drainage and raised planters. They ranged in size from as small as a car parking bay (11.5m<sup>2</sup>) to over 180m<sup>2</sup> for a pocket park. The

complexity and scale of projects was also diverse, with some assessed as being deliverable within 6 months and others requiring in excess of 1.5 years to develop for implementation. One of the applications was from a local art charity for people with autism and learning difficulties. As part of their efforts to become net zero carbon, their proposal was for a “dye garden” which would allow them to grow plants to harvest ink and dye, negating the need to buy paint in plastic bottles. The benefits includes new opportunities to socialise, interact with nature and boost mental health whilst making the area more welcoming. The dye garden is one of the ways that the charity can work with participants to promote mental health, before they need to turn to the NHS, medication, or therapy. Gardening and exercise all supports good mental health. Successful applications are being worked up directly by the Council with engagement with the applicant and wider community. Islington Council will directly deliver the proposals rather than award a grant. All infrastructure and structures, such as raised planting beds, parklets and pocket parks, will remain Islington owned and managed asset under existing insurance, removing cost to applicants, making it an inclusive process.

- 3.13. The closing date for applications was 29th April. A total of 95 applications were received across all 17 wards and 38 of which are being supported to carry through into delivery.

## Islington Parklet Policy

- 3.14. Many of the points raised in this section directly apply to pocket parks, Sustainable Urban Drainage, rain gardens and other types of urban greening through this programme. However, there is popular demand to have the process for parklets set out specifically. Please note, it is not a separate process from the Islington Greener Together application process.
- 3.15. A parklet is the reuse of a parking space to create a new opportunity and Islington parklets have opted to always ensure that greening is part of the outcome to align with the Transport Strategy. There is a strong desire from residents to have more parklets in the public highway and whilst there are a few examples of them around the borough there has not previously been a clear policy and process on how residents can apply to have a parklet in the Highway.
- 3.16. In response to the Climate and Ecological emergency and the Net Zero Carbon Vision 2030 there is a policy direction now to increase greening in the borough and a people friendly streets programme to deliver liveable neighbourhoods across the borough as part of which we are changing the way we use or valuable public spaces. This includes delivering a variety of greening initiatives on the public highway, including converting parking bays to parklets. Parklets are a great

opportunity for residents to engage in the greening of their streets and to build communities.

- 3.14. Islington will use the Greener Together Programme as a means for people to apply for consideration of parklets on the Highway. This allows a clear process for residents and businesses to apply and for officers to review and manage those applications. That will be an annual application process through an on-line application on the website.
- 3.15. Islington is in the process of developing a design precedent and standard for parklets on the Highway which will ensure that all health and safety factors are adequately taken into account. This will create a design that can be adapted for each specific site and use, for example café. They will be designed so that planting can be maintained safely from the pavement side of the road or within an allocated refuge space. The parklets would be built and installed by the Highways service and will remain a Council owned asset. This means that responsibility for the structure is retained by the Council and does not place a liability burden on residents. Residents will then take on the management and maintenance of the planting through a maintenance agreement and will be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the planting. (There is a maintenance agreement to sign within the application process, to both manage expectations and to ensure this requirement is known from the outset). This is also necessary for the schemes to be carried out under permitted development legislation. For example, we could not deliver a scheme on TfL land, that would need to be delivered by TfL as the relevant Highways Authority. Projects will be delivered within the constraints of permitted development.
- 3.16. Planning will be consulted on the design and locations of schemes, particularly in Conservation Areas and the settings of Listed Buildings which will be more sensitive and in terms of any potential pre-existing conditions that may conflict with the proposed use.
- 3.17. If the Parklet is to be used for tables and chairs in addition for example where outside a café or restaurant, then a separate tables and chairs licence will need to be applied for.
- 3.18. It is intended to use the Greener Together capital funding over the next three years to support a number of applications to ensure that this is a fair and accessible process for all residents and communities. Where proposals are not prioritised for funding yet feasible and accepted then there will be the option for residents to fund the parklet/planter themselves and for Highways to deliver it and maintain the infrastructure.

## 2 Year IGT Programme

- 3.19. It is clear from the number of applications from a relatively short launch that there is real appetite for this programme. Some of the ideas that are being proposed are ambitious and need time to develop and further resources to bring to reality. It is quite probable that given the longer lead in time and increased publicity going forwards as projects are announced and then implemented that there will be many more applications.
- 3.20. Expectations may need to be managed around the number of schemes that the programme can support going forward. The process for prioritising projects that has been developed this year will become even more crucial in determining which projects to support. Ongoing efforts to fundraise and draw in additional resources to the programme will also support this. There has already been significant success in this and those are set out below in this report, but more will be needed if the programme is able to meet our own and the residents ambitions. The linking of the Greener Together programme with other capital initiatives such as Liveable Neighbourhoods and Thriving Communities will also allow for additional projects to be supported.
- Consideration also needs to be given on how to resource and enable Greening initiatives beyond the life of the Transformation and capital funding assigned to this programme.

## Greener Together Champions

- 3.21. In order for this greening initiative to be sustainable then it is vital that there is strong engagement from residents and communities in the ownership, management and maintenance of those spaces. The intention for them is to become community hubs not just green spaces. The Council recognises that residents need to be supported to do this and if this scheme is going to address inequalities, then it is critical that residents from all communities and backgrounds are empowered and enabled to green their neighbourhoods.
- 3.22. To support the Council is seeking to use a portion of the funding available to commission a VCS partner to establish a Greener Together Champions programme. Residents will be able to volunteer to become a Greener Together Champion and they will receive training and support to enable them to provide a leadership role in greening their local community. A few years ago, Garden Organic ran a Master Gardener programme in the borough where they trained up a number of volunteers in horticultural skills to be able to pass on those skills and advise to others in their neighbourhood. This will be a similar approach but in addition to horticultural training and advice the programme would also provide training in community organising on how to mobilise the community at a grass roots level and engage and involve people. The Council is seeking to commission support for a 3-year programme.



3.23. The Council recognises that this programme has potential to incorporate a broader range of issues than just greening and horticulture and there are discussions taking place about the potential to broaden the scope of this programme to incorporate Tree Wardens, energy and recycling champions, corporate social responsibility opportunities and volunteers.

## Additional Greening the Borough Projects

3.24. This programme is part of a much wider range of projects that comprise our broader Greener Together programme to deliver greening the grey on a more significant scale. Part of that work is to create the strategic framework for the delivery of individual projects and delivering larger scale pilot projects that start to show people what is possible and help people to re-imagine what our streets and wider public realm could look like.

3.25. Green Finance for 'Islington Pocket Park Framework' is a recent successfully funded project through DEFRA's Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund. The project will identify and explore a deliverable framework for converting Islington's dead ends and stub roads into new pocket parks. The multiple benefits presented provide new potential opportunities for private financing of urban green initiatives at scale and pace. We have £100k of development funds awarded which need to be spent and programme complete by Spring 24.

3.26. 'Nature On Your Doorstep' is a new linked programme funded through the Future Parks Accelerator Programme that funded the Parks for Health project. This is funded through the National Heritage Lottery programme and The National Trust. This programme is in partnership with Camden. Both boroughs have a dense population and an extremely inequitable provision of access to nature. Those in greatest need often do not have access to the high-quality green spaces that have been shown in our Parks for Health programme to help overcome disadvantage. This programme sets to explore and develop creative and innovative ways of using other types of land to provide the access to nature and the green infrastructure benefits which are required in order to address this inequality, improve quality of life and support vital ecosystem services. This programme seeks to ensure the tools we have to scale and implement our trials to date, in expanding green infrastructure meets the needs of our communities, effectively supports environmental functions, and is properly resourced now and in the future. Here we have been awarded £280k in partnership with Camden and the project is required to complete by Spring 24.

3.27. The TfL Green and Healthy Streets fund has awarded £265,000 to Greening Cally Connections. Islington is planning a Liveable Neighbourhood in this area and this project further enables these council's ambitions. The main focus for the project are

to 1) Improve streetscape design on the approaching roads and at the entrances to Bingfield Park focusing on accessibility and SuDS features to enhance natural drainage and improved legibility of the entrances to the park. 2) Building in more green infrastructure through tree planting by creating a walkable, greener corridor linking Bingfield Park and Barnard Park to the east, including a new pocket park in Freeling Street and between Bingfield park and the York Way cycleway scheme to the west. 3) Focus on active transport and encouraging cycling by enhancing the cycle connection leading up to and around Bingfield Park

- 3.28. Feasible projects, which have broad community support, which did not make it to the list of successful applications for this year's funding, will be reviewed for additional support via our proposed Crowd Funding style platforms, if no alternative funding routes are identified or successful. This is currently a work in progress and platforms currently under consideration for example Space Hive but we will also explore whether Islington Giving could host this. We are aiming to have a process in place by January 2023.

## 4. Implications

### 4.1. Financial Implications

The Greening the Borough Programme has an annual capital allocation of £500k for the next three years and transformation funding for 22/23 of £200k.

### 4.2. Legal Implications

#### 4.2.1. Parklets and planters

Under Section 16 of the Traffic Management Act 2004, local traffic authorities must manage their road network with a view to achieving, so far as may be reasonably practicable having regard to their other obligations, policies and the following objectives:

- a) securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network; and
- b) facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority.

The action which the authority may take in performing that duty includes, in particular, any action which they consider will contribute to securing:

- c) the more efficient use of their road network; or
- d) the avoidance, elimination or reduction of road congestion or other disruption to the movement of traffic on their road network or a road network for which another authority is the traffic authority; and may involve the exercise of any power to regulate or co-ordinate the uses made of any road (or part of a road) in the road network ...”

“Traffic” includes pedestrians.

- 4.2.2 The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (Part 1, s 124 and Schedule 9) gives the council the power to make Traffic Management Orders. In making Traffic Management Orders the council must follow the procedures in the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.
- 4.2.3 In the exercise of its powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, the council is required, under section 122 of the Act, to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off street, whilst at the same time have regard to the following considerations:
- The desirability of securing and maintaining reasonable access to premises;
  - The effect on the amenities of any locality affected and the importance of regulating and restricting the use of roads by heavy commercial vehicles to preserve or improve the amenities of the areas through which the roads run;
  - The impact on air quality both locally and in the surrounding areas;
  - The importance of facilitating the passage of public service vehicles and of securing the safety and convenience of persons using or desiring to use such vehicles; and
  - Any other matters appearing to the council to be relevant.
- 4.2.4 The proposals outlined in paragraphs 3.14 to 3.20 should have regard to the Department for Transport's (DfT) statutory guidance 'Traffic Management Act 2004: Network Management to support recovery from COVID19' updated on 30 July 2021.
- 4.2.5 When deciding whether to make a Traffic Management Order the council must have regard to the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy (sections 142 and 144(1)(a) Greater London Authority Act 1999). That strategy emphasises the importance of reducing emissions and improving air quality. Regard should also be had to the Islington Transport Strategy (adopted in November 2020).
- 4.2.6 The council, as Highway Authority, has a general power to improve the highway under Part V of the Highways Act 1980. Section 96 of the Highways Act 1980 gives the council the power to plant shrubs in the highway and erect guards etc to protect the shrubs. In addition, section 115B of the Highways Act 1980 empowers a highway authority to place objects or structures on the highway to enhance the amenity of the highway or its immediate surroundings (which includes providing shrubs or flowers).
- 4.2.7 The council has power to grant tables and chairs licences under Part VIIA of the Highways Act 1980.
- 4.2.8 Improvements to the highway by the highway authority do not require planning permission (section 55(2)(b) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or are permitted development (Class A, Part 9 of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 ("the Order"). The council also has permitted development rights under Part 12 of Schedule 2 to the Order subject to certain limitations.
- 4.2.9 Regard should be had to the provisions of the Human Rights Act. In particular, the provisions of Article 1, of the First Protocol protection of property and Article 8, right to respect for private and family life. In relation to Article 8, right to respect for private and

family life has a broad interpretation and extends to being in a public place if there is a reasonable expectation of privacy there. This right can be interfered with where lawful, is aimed at pursuing a legitimate aim and must go no further than is necessary and proportionate.

### **4.3. Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**

4.3.1. This programme directly contributes to the delivery of the Natural Environment and Transport Workstreams of the Net Zero Carbon Vision 2030. It is supporting the conversion of road space to green infrastructure to support biodiversity, improve air quality, reduce surface water run off and mitigate urban heat island impacts from climate change. Some of the projects will support local food growing. It will support increased tree planting to support delivery of one of the key natural environment commitments.

### **4.4. Equalities Impact Assessment**

4.4.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

4.4.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment document was completed on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2022. The main findings are that in general the different programmes had low levels of risks regarding equality impact. Disability groups (including carers) and young/elderly age group could be negatively impacted by the construction of greening project. Mitigations are in place to maintain safe working practices which minimise the negative impacts that may occur. If there are issues arising for disabled groups or blue badge holders, we will seek to provide alternative temporary routes. The full Equalities Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix 1. If individual projects as they develop are considered to have an impact then an individual EqIA will be conducted for that project.

## **5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

5.1. This report sets out the process for allocating the £1.5 million capital allocation for Islington Greener Together to support Islington communities to realise their ideas for a greener borough. It also provides a collaborative process for the application for and approval of parklets for the borough.

- 5.2. The report recommends that Executive note the process to date and approve the programme for the following two years.
- 5.3. In order to build community capacity and sustain community engagement in the management and maintenance of the schemes to approve the commissioning of the Islington Greener Together Champion programme.
- 5.4. As the programme progresses in its delivery it will be necessary to make changes to the programme so it is also recommended that Executive delegates authority to amend the programme and approve individual projects to the Service Directors for Environment and Commercial Operations and Climate Change and Transport in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment, Transport and Air Quality.

**Appendices:**

- Appendix 1 - Islington Greener Together Equality Impact Assessment Document

**Background papers:**

- None

**Final report clearance:**

Signed by:



**Executive Member for Environment, Transport and Air Quality**

Date: 27.9.22

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